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Senate passes bills encouraging donation of stem cells from umbilical cord blood

LANSING—The state Senate passed legislation today that promotes a statewide network of umbilical cord blood banks in Michigan, said Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, sponsor of one of the bills.

“This legislation could help save many lives in Michigan,” said Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores. “The blood from umbilical cords has been found to be significantly valuable in many medical treatments. And importantly, there are no ethical concerns with collecting and storing this blood.”

According to the National Marrow Donor Program, the blood in the umbilical cord and placenta is unique because it contains large numbers of blood-forming cells. The March of Dimes has stated that stem cells collected from umbilical cord blood have advantages over stem cells from bone marrow. These include easier retrieval, a broader range of possible recipients for cord blood and fewer complications such as recipient rejection.

Van Woerkom’s measure, SB 1354, instructs the Department of Community Health to increase public awareness about the blood banks and the benefits of donating umbilical cord blood. The department is also required to report to the Legislature on how a \$5 million appropriation for the network is spent.

SBs 1353 and 1354 now head to the House for consideration.

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